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## MTPDS Program Monthly Newsletter

Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) program is a 3-year USAID-funded project supporting the professional development of teachers in Malawi and implementation of the National Primary Curriculum (NPC). MTPDS is being implemented by Creative Associates International, RTI International and Seward Inc. in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

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"We are thrilled with the content organization in the textbook ('Nditha Kuwerenga' reader) and also appreciative of the investment of skills by the intervention."

*Haswell Kalumbe, a Standard 1 teacher at Makanda Primary School in Ntchisi speaking about Literacy intervention*

### US Literacy experts appreciate literacy intervention



*Penelope Bender assessing a learner at Makanda School*

ON MAY 7<sup>th</sup>, a team of US-based literacy experts, Penelope Bender and Maggie Koziol, along with USAID Education Team Leader, Christine Djondo, paid a visit to Makanda Primary School in Ntchisi to witness the MTPDS 'Maziko a Kuwerenga' literacy intervention in action. During their visit, they attended a Standard 1 literacy class, conducted learner assessments and held discussions with project stakeholders. Makanda is one of 1,310 schools in seven districts which are benefiting from the literacy intervention through training and support of early grade teachers in improved literacy methods and the supply of supplementary readers to learners. The team was welcomed by MTPDS staff, district education officials, teachers and community members.

Upon arrival, the visitors were briefed by Odala Banda, MTPDS's Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Manager, on the design of the intervention. They then attended a Standard 1 literacy lesson that was in

progress, taught by Pamela Ndazona Seda, one of the teachers who is undergoing training. The lesson covered the introduction of letters and their sounds, phonemic awareness, syllable pronunciation and reading of whole words. Learners demonstrated their reading and writing skills, acquired through the intervention, by reading from their textbooks and writing sentences. After the lesson, the visitors assessed two learners who were randomly selected from the class of 144 learners.

Rounding off the visit, the team met with project stakeholders, including, teachers, parents, local leaders and district education officials at the Teacher Development Centre (TDC), to learn more about their experiences in supporting the program, while encouraging them to sustain it. They stressed USAID's commitment to a global effort to improve early grade literacy, especially in countries like Malawi where performance is weak.

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## Tracking teacher performance and learner achievement in the intervention districts



*Tracking literacy intervention impact through classroom and learner assessment (below)*

AS THE MTPDS PROGRAM RECENTLY expanded its “Maziko a Kuwerenga” literacy intervention activities to now include seven districts, it is making a consolidated effort to monitor the progress of teachers and learners in these districts to show the impact of the intervention. In order to do so, the project is collecting M&E data on a number of fronts:

- Monthly classroom observations of teachers’ practices
- Regular assessment of learners in foundational literacy skills (using a simplified literacy assessment instrument adapted from EGRA)
- Collection of student literacy assessment data from teachers
- Use of *Tangerine* digital software for conducting EGRA assessments in Salima and Ntchisi

With nearly all divisional offices now fully staffed with an M&E Officer, a Teacher Training / Literacy Coordinator, and an Accounts Officer, MTPDS has been able to enhance its M&E activities to put greater focus on tracking the progress of teachers’ classroom practices and learners’ literacy achievement as it relates to project interventions. This is being done through regular M&E visits to the same selected schools which represent three different levels of MTPDS involvement: (1) Schools

receiving “Maziko a Kuwerenga” literacy intervention trainings and materials with additional coaching from MTPDS staff; (2) Schools receiving “Maziko a Kuwerenga” interventions trainings and materials without additional coaching; and (3) Schools receiving national CPD literacy trainings but not receiving “Maziko a Kuwerenga” interventions and materials.



In the first weeks of May, MTPDS collected baseline information at all of the selected schools. This M&E activity is planned to be carried out on a monthly basis in order to track the progress of teachers in using essential literacy teaching skills and the progress of learners in reading. In addition, at the end of May, MTPDS piloted the use of a digital software package called *Tangerine* to conduct EGRA assessments of students in Salima and Ntchisi districts using computer tablets rather than pencil-and-paper instruments. Details of this assessment activity will be forthcoming in the June Newsletter.

### *From Page 1*

Speaking on behalf of teachers, Haswell Kalumbe, a Standard 1 teacher at Makanda, hailed the project and its efforts which are evident in the Standard 1 learners’ achievement in reading. “We are thrilled with the content organization in the textbook (‘Nditha Kuwerenga’ reader) and also appreciative of the investment of skills by the intervention.”

Community support for literacy at Makanda is exemplary. Parents have mobilized to form an EGRA Committee. Its members declared their ongoing commitment to mobilizing parents in support of literacy development. Benson Kamtsina, the group leader, expressed joy over improvement of reading skills of learners. “It was surprising to note that Standard 1 learners are reading despite not finishing an academic year. We are and will always be there to support that.” The group has also helped to make classrooms print-rich through their contribution of clay containers and funds to buy chart papers to be pasted on the walls.

Henry Kapachika, Primary Education Advisor (PEA) for Makanda, concluded with an assurance that the District Education Office will do all in its power to sustain efforts of the intervention.

The visitors praised the relationship between project implementers, teachers and community members, stressing the vital role parents must play in supporting and sustaining literacy. As Ms. Bender put it, “The school day is short. The child’s day is much longer.”



*Penelope Bender with community members*



## Ngazi teacher sees improved reading in students



*Linly Soko demonstrating her reading skills*

AFTER SPENDING MORE THAN THREE years in school, you would expect learners to be able to do more than just write their name and read a few simple sentences. Unfortunately, throughout Malawi most early grade learners struggle to achieve adequate reading skills. Up until this year, Linly Soko, aged 11, of Ngazi Primary School in Mzimba North, was no exception. According to her teacher,

Ms. Mercent Gondwe, teaching literacy has been one of the most challenging aspects of the new curriculum under the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR), and students have struggled to learn how to read as a result.

The Continuous Professional Development (CPD) component of the MTPDS project is focused on improving

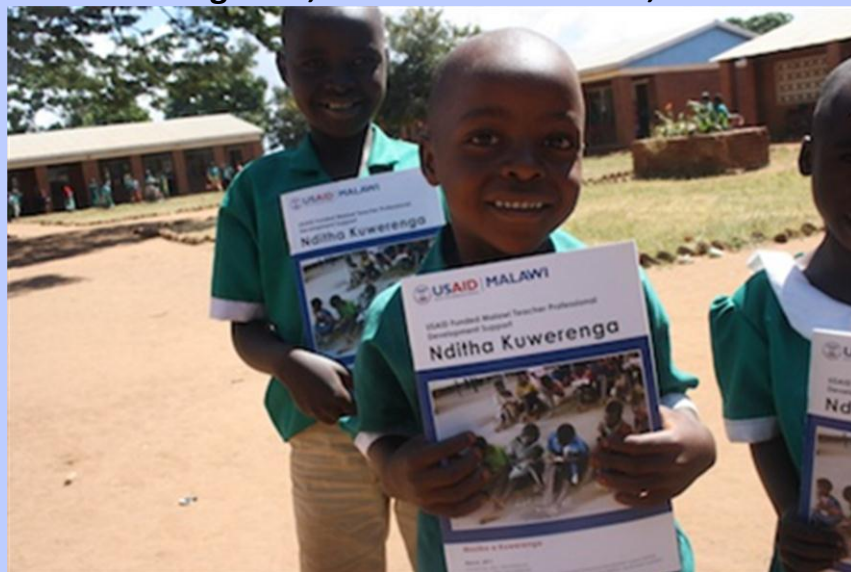
teachers' literacy instruction skills and school managers' leadership abilities, with the aim of supporting implementation of the National Primary Curriculum and improving reading in the early grades. CPD is delivered in two forms, through training on Literacy Modules provided to all Standard 1-4 teachers and through training on Leadership Modules provided to head teachers and deputies from every primary school in Malawi. The Literacy Modules are based on an approach which focuses on teaching foundational literacy skills, starting with learning the sounds and syllables of words.

Ms. Gondwe explains: "Soon after attending Literacy Module 1 we realized that learners struggled when teachers only use the whole word approach, so we made a significant departure to incorporate the syllabic approach in teaching Chichewa." She says that the CPD trainings have motivated her to "also spend more time on remedial work with the learners who could not impress during official time."

Teachers have reported that they find this approach to teaching literacy better because it introduces learners to letters and syllables first. Ms. Gondwe added that in less than a month some of her learners in Standard 4, who previously had problems with reading Chichewa, were able to easily follow and master the basic reading skills by learning through the syllabic approach. Among those students was Linly Soko who is now able to read words, sentences, paragraphs and passages.

Today, Linly and her classmates can read Chichewa with great fluency. "I am sincerely grateful to MTPDS for equipping us with such good skills that have assisted us to help our learners to acquire reading skills," exclaims Ms. Gondwe.

## MTPDS brings 160,000 readers to over 1,300 schools



*Through the Literacy Intervention, MTPDS has supplied 160,000 copies of the supplementary reader 'Nditha Kuwerenga' to over 1,300 schools in the 7 districts that are benefiting from the intervention. Learners at Makanda Primary School in Ntchisi (above) have one more reason to continue smiling.*

## Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Update

### Q&A with a CPD mentor: “It is exciting to be a mentor”

**Q: When you became a CPD mentor, what did you find new or interesting about CPD?**

A: In 2010 I attended Continuous Professional Development Literacy Module 1, Leadership Module 1 and Numeracy Module 1 workshops at St Theresa TDC in Lilongwe. From that moment I became a CPD mentor for our cluster, comprising Matiya, Thundu and Chipiloni Schools. There is a lot that is new and interesting about CPD. We have benefitted from new ideas on creating a print rich environment, new methodologies for teaching reading and writing skills, leadership skills, and how to manage the school-based CPD cycle.

**Q: What do you enjoy most about being a CPD mentor?**

A: It is exciting to be a CPD mentor. I clearly remember the time I was introduced to what CPD is. I still am enjoying it because when I organize cluster and school CPD activities teachers participate fully. When I visit schools to find out if what we discuss at cluster level is being implemented, I also enjoy. For example, when I went to Chipiloni School I found that most learners in Standard 3 are able to read and write. This gives me an indication that CPD is good and teachers are doing exactly what they are supposed to do.



*Eunice Thewe – CPD Mentor at Matiya Primary School, Zomba Urban District*

**Q: What interesting CPD activities or innovations have you been able to carry out at your school, cluster or zone, which others haven't?**

A: There are a lot of activities that I carry out at our cluster and school. One of them is helping learners to write on lines. For example, if a learner wants to write the word “mphaka” he or she should write like this (she demonstrates using three lines on a chalkboard with the letters p, h and k extending up or down depending on their length). Other activities include: good methods of teaching English, teaching Chichewa using syllables, sensitizing the community about CPD, involving parents in CPD committees, and methodologies for teaching addition and subtraction of numbers with regrouping.

**Q: Any special advice to fellow CPD mentors across the country?**

A: My advice to my fellow CPD mentors is that we should have a positive attitude towards CPD, because it is good... Let us do what we are supposed to do as CPD mentors and let us continue sharing experiences including challenges.

### Events Calendar for June 2012

1. **Policy:**
  - 14 June: Dissemination meeting on clarified roles and responsibilities of MoEST institutions and departments
  - 15 June: Consultative meeting with DIAS on establishment of CPD program for PEAs and senior primary school teachers
2. **CPD:**
  - On-going till 17 June: Literacy Module 2 Cluster trainings
3. **Early Grade Literacy Assessment:**
  - 4-15 June: Coaching Standard 1 teachers
  - 18-22 June: Monitoring implementation of literacy intervention
  - 25-29 June: Monitoring and following up of SMC/PTA action plans on supporting literacy intervention
4. **Quality Teaching and Learning Materials:**
  - 11-15 June: Field testing of Continuous Assessment Guidelines
  - 25 June – 6 July: Std. 3 Textbook Refinement Workshop at MIE
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
  - 1-4 June: School Management Committee training at selected zones
  - 18-29 June: Annual teacher classroom observations
  - 25-29 June: Monthly teacher observations and learner assessments

**Note from the Editor:** MTPDS Program Monthly Newsletter intends to provide insights on activities, achievements and success stories from the field. We are therefore inviting comments, contributions and tips for teacher professional development. Please send your contributions to the Editor, MTPDS Program, Area 10/612, Tsoka Road, Private bag B481, Lilongwe, Tel: (+265) 1 794 977. E-mail: [info@mtpds.rti.org](mailto:info@mtpds.rti.org), Web: [www.mtpds.org](http://www.mtpds.org). For useful downloadable resources: <http://www.mtpds.org/resources/CPD-manuals>